

211 THE
REVOLT
OF THE
TEN TRIBES.

A
SERMON,
PREACHED IN THE
CHURCH OF GOVAN,
ON THE FORENOON OF THE
PUBLIC FAST,
December 12th, 1776.

BY THE REVEREND
WILLIAM THOM, A.M.
MINISTER OF GOVAN.

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THE
REVOLVING
OF THE
TENNIS TRIBES

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WILLIAM O. M. A. L.
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

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I KINGS xii. 1,—30.

AND Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him King.

2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of King Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt,)

3 That they sent and called him: and Jeroboam, and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying,

4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.

5 And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.

6 ¶ And King Rehoboam consulted with the old men that stood before Solomon, his father, while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise, that I may answer this people?

7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt

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serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him:

9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us, lighter?

10 And the young men that were grown up with him, spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loyns.

11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

12 ¶ So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the King had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.

13 And the King answered the people roughly, and forsook the old mens counsel that they gave him;

14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

15 Wherefore the King hearkened not unto the

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people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Abijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

16 ¶ So when all Israel saw that the King hearkened not unto them, the people answered the King, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel! now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

17 But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

18 Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died: therefore King Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

20 And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him King over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

21 ¶ And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.

22 But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

23 Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, King of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying,

24 Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house, for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.

25 ¶ Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Peniel.

26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David;

27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam King of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam King of Judah.

28 Whereupon the King took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29 And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan,

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TO know the history of mankind, should be the study of every person: to know the changes that have happened in the circumstances of individuals, and of great societies, and the causes of those changes, may be of great utility to every man, whether he be in a public or in a private station. Not to speak of the pleasure derived from a survey of past transactions and revolutions; there are to be found, in the history of almost any country, some noble examples of integrity and virtue, which we ought to admire and imitate; and also many striking instances of folly, injustice, and cruelty, which we ought to abhor: such instances and examples furnish us with lessons to form our temper, and to direct our conduct in life. But there is no history so fruitful of instruction as that contained in the holy scripture: the holy scripture is, in a peculiar sense, the history of providence, the history of God's moral government: 'God's countenance beholdeth the upright, and his face is set against the wicked.' By his disposal, the wise and prudent *'inherit worldly glory,* and shame is the promotion of *'fools;* the righteous are oftentimes prosperous, and, to a considerable degree, they meet with the reward of virtue even in the present life; the devices of the wicked are disappointed, their cruel projects are retarded, or altogether blasted, and their hands cannot perform their enterprize; so that they also, even in this life, commonly meet with some part of that punishment which bad men deserve.

I confess that I feel much pleasure in the historical passages of scripture; some of these I have, not long ago, read, and endeavoured to explain to you; and I have often wondered, that even those who have too low an esteem of divine revelation do not peruse the scripture-history attentively, because I am sure, that those of them who have capacity might derive great instruction and improvement from that perusal.

In the chapter I have now read, we have the account of a sudden and memorable revolution that happened in the kingdom of Judah, the revolt of the ten tribes, which, alas! gave rise to bloody wars between the two kingdoms, weakened each of them, and was unfavourable to the true religion. It is the design of this discourse, to consider the history before me, and to offer some remarks, all or most of which have, I presume, occurred already to every attentive reader.

‘Solomon slept with his fathers, and Rehoboam, his son, reigned in his stead*.’ It is not expressly said, but it is evidently implied, that, when Solomon died, Rehoboam was immediately crowned at Jerusalem, and set apart to be King of Judah and Benjamin, by being anointed with oil, as was the custom among the Jews. David was anointed at Hebron to be King of Judah seven years before he was made King of the ten tribes: but after Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, was basely murdered in his own palace, the Israelites waited on David at Hebron; and, when he had made a league or compact with them, respecting

* Chap. xi. 43.

their privileges, and the taxes they were to pay, he was appointed to be King of the ten tribes also. Seventy-three years had elapsed since this union of the two crowns; and yet it seems the ten tribes were still considered as being, in some sort, a distinct kingdom from that of Judah. 'And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him King*.' Rehoboam went to Shechem: all Israel, that is, the heads of the tribes, delegates from all Israel, were there before him; they had met in Congress at Shechem, to make him King, not with power unlimited: from their regard to the family of David, they desired to make him King; they had come to Shechem in that view; but it was upon the conditions which they expressly mention; for, as was natural, the regard they had to their own interest was stronger than their attachment to David's family.

Shechem: at this ancient town many public meetings were held. It was in the tribe of Ephraim, and stood on the brow of a hill, at the side of that beautiful valley which lay between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizzim, from which two mountains the blessings and curses, mentioned in Deuteronomy, were pronounced. It was in the parcel of land which Jacob a little before his death gave to his son Joseph. Here Joseph's bones were buried. Here was Jacob's well, near which our Saviour had the conversation with the woman of Samaria, mentioned in John's Gospel. Shechem was at first built by Hamor, and

* Chap. xii. 1.

so called after the name of his son. The mention of this place is introduced, in scripture, with a very tragical story: Dinah, Jacob's daughter, had gone out to see the daughters of the land; that is, as if some unwary young woman should go to some distant fair or market, where she is a stranger; or, as one in fashionable life, goes, unguarded, to waste her time at a play, or a nocturnal card-assembly, or a masquerade: she was fair; she was in danger; Shechem saw her, and dishonoured her: but, being sick, and desperately in love with her, he would have given all he had in the world to have her to wife. Old Hamor, his father, pitied his distress, and, dreading no guile, entered into a treaty with Jacob's family about the marriage. They perfidiously consented to the match, on condition that Hamor, Shechem, the citizens, all their domestics, and slaves, should be circumcised. To these terms Hamor agreed, and Shechem also, who 'was more honourable than all his father's house.' Trusting to the sincerity of Jacob's family, they were all circumcised, and so deprived themselves of all means of making any defence, should they be attacked; and attacked most certainly they were; for, upon the third day, when they were sore, two of Jacob's sons rushed in upon them, sword in hand, and barbarously butchered all the males, man and child; just as if in a field of battle, when the weaker side fling down their arms, and surrender to the stronger, the stronger should instantly fall on, and, with unrelenting cruelty, massacre the un-

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armed soldiers upon the spot. Such things, alas! have been done.

The heads of the ten tribes, who had come to Shechem, fearing or suspecting that Rehoboam and his counsellors would not grant them the terms they were to demand, had laid their measures with a considerable degree of political ability: they brought one with them, whom, in case of necessity, they intended to make King, and to erect themselves into a separate independent kingdom, as they had been already, under the government of Saul's son: this was their intention, in case Rehoboam should refuse their petition. The man they took care to bring along with them was Jeroboam.

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had lost his father when he was very young; and, though he had none to take care of his education but his widowed mother, he soon emerged into greatness: by his spirit and activity he caused himself to be taken notice of: he is called the servant of Solomon, just as Ministers of State are now called the King's servants; but, in point of rank and honour, he was at least on a footing with those great officers mentioned above, two of whom were married to Solomon's two daughters*. He was a mighty man of valour, ambitious, and a subtle politician. He had already, it seems, displayed his great capacity for business: the people had formed a high esteem of him: and 'Solomon seeing the young man, that he had 'industry, made him ruler over all the charge

* Chap. iv. 11, 15.

‘ of the house of Joseph*.’ He had a difficult part to act; to please the King, by exacting the heavy taxes; and to acquire and preserve the good-will of the people: in both which, however, by his address, he succeeded, at least, for a time. But, in the courts of absolute Princes, no man is in so great danger as one in whose character ability and popularity are united. Neither the Prince nor the Ministers are at ease whilst such a man is near them, in office, or is suffered to live. It was this that caused the murder of the renowned and incomparable Germanicus, in the reign of the vile Tiberius, his uncle, who ordered him to be poisoned. This was the cause of Corbulo’s death, in the reign of Nero; and of the wise and virtuous Agricola’s, in the reign of Domitian; Agricola, who, by erecting Roman schools, began first to civilize this savage country. Nay, in modern times, if a Minister is popular, and possessed of uncommon talents and integrity; if he ventures to take the guidance of public affairs, when, by a wretched management, the state is miserable at home, and contemptible abroad; if he conducts a dangerous war successfully; if he raises the renown of his country higher, and spreads it wider than ever it was before; if he attempts to lessen pensions, and to abridge the number of pensioners; if he applies to the exigencies of the state these immense sums which were formerly given in shameful bribes—all the corrupted courtiers, and their vile flatterers, are his enemies. Not satisfied with displacing him,

* Chap. xi. 28.

they are busy to blast his character with their venomous breath: the cry against him comes from above; all the subaltern tools of corruption join in the cry; and though he be as virtuous as Cato, they will strive, in vain, to render his name as odious as that of Nero: and if a statesman, of the most distinguished merit, above corruption, and not chargeable with any of those vices which in the issue appeared in Jeroboam, hath, in our times, been treated in so shocking a manner, need we wonder that the Jewish courtiers should sollicit Solomon to put Jeroboam to death. It is said that 'Jeroboam lift up his hand against the King*.' I do not recollect that he made any open insurrection; the meaning probably is, that he artfully endeavoured to steal away the hearts of the men of Israel, behaving like Absalom, who 'when any man came near him, to do him obeisance, put forth his hand, and took him, and saluted him.' And as in Solomon's declining years, a weakness had crept into his government, that King knew well that Jeroboam had sagacity to observe such weakness, and that he had also both ambition and popularity to avail himself of it, if a proper opportunity should offer.

But I must not forget, that, besides Jeroboam's talents and popularity, there was another thing that made him to be suspected by Solomon: Jeroboam being to wait on the court, had clad himself in a new or birth-day suit; for a great man is forced to regard so frivolous a thing as external decoration: as he was returning from court,

* Chap. xi. 26.

Ahijah, the prophet, met him in the fields, and they two were alone: 'Ahijah caught hold of the new garment, and rent it in twelve pieces, and said to Jeroboam, take thee ten pieces; for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee*.' This prediction, it seems, had come to Solomon's ears, (probably it had been published by Jeroboam himself;) and therefore, as well as for the other cause I mentioned, Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam, and Jeroboam arose and fled into Egypt; for even in the decline of Solomon's affairs, he dared not to remain in Judah. He escaped into Egypt; but, as soon as he heard of Solomon's death, he was, it seems, in no fear of Rehoboam, or he thought of Ahijah's prophecy, and resolved to return; and, at the same time, he was by the ten tribes invited and entreated to return home. He is, we see, along with the heads of the tribes when they present their petition to Rehoboam†; for 'Jeroboam, and all the congregation of Israel came, and spoke unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous; now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.' This is the complaint of the Israelites, their petition of right, the condition on which they were to make Rehoboam their King. You will here remark, that the complaint is only against Solomon. David had made a league with the ten tribes; and, it

* Chap. xi. 29, 30, 31, &c † xii. 3, 4.

seems, he kept to his oath, and did not violate their rights. It was Solomon that did so. You will also remark, that there are two particular grievances complained of; the 'grievous service,' and 'the heavy yoke.' Solomon was most part of his reign occupied in great buildings; the service, the personal labour at these works was exceedingly grievous. 'King Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel, and the levy was thirty thousand men. He had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains, besides the chief officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred which ruled over the people that wrought in the work*.' This levy was the grievous service of men. The heavy yoke was the levy of taxes, and it was not less grievous. 'And this is the reason of the levy which King Solomon raised for to build the house of the Lord, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and many more; among others, 'Tadmor in the wilderness†,' near the banks of the Euphrates, afterwards called Palmyra, the noble ruins of which are still to be seen. David, indeed, had laid up much gold for building the temple; and from Eloth and Eziengaber, ports upon the Red Sea, which David had violently taken from the Edomites, Solomon carried on a great trade, and imported much gold from Tarshish and from Ophir; but, to carry on and complete such immense works, he found it necessary to break the league his father

* Chap. v. 13, — 16. † ix. 15, — 18.

had confirmed by oath, and to augment the taxes on his own subjects. It is computed, that, from a territory scarce larger, I believe, than the half of Ireland, he levied, yearly, near five millions Sterling, though possibly some part of this sum was extorted from the conquered provinces. The cattle, which, by his twelve officers, he exacted from the people to maintain his table, was also a burden and a grievance. ‘And Solomon’s provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pasture, and an hundred sheep, besides harts and roe-bucks, and fallow-deer, and fatted fowl*.’

The claim or petition is, ‘Make the heavy yoke which thy father put upon us lighter, and we will serve thee.’ It is modestly expressed; they leave it to the King how far he was to make their yoke lighter. I suppose they meant to say, Depart from these new exactions and prestations; restore our original rights; let us be taxed agreeably to the compact, the league we made with David, agreeably to the ancient charter we have from that King, ‘and we will serve thee.’

Though it doth not appear that the representatives of the ten tribes had the King’s authority to meet in Congress at Shechem, their petition or remonstrance, however, was graciously received by Rehoboam. There have been, in latter times, petitions, against new and heavy taxations, humbly offered by great and respectable bodies of men; which petitions have not only been rejec-

* Chap. iv. 22, 23.

ted, but new and severer measures have been enacted against the petitioners and their constituents. Rehoboam heard and received the remonstrance. Hitherto, indeed, I see in him no symptoms of any arbitrary temper; and had he fallen into the hands of wise and reasonable counsellors, he might have reigned over all Israel and Judah in the same splendor his father had done. 'He said unto them,' that is, to the delegates, 'Depart yet for three days, and then come again to me; and the people departed*.' Hitherto all is transacted with becoming decency, and promised a good issue. The Israelites, from the liking they had to the family of David, were willing to serve Rehoboam on the condition they had mentioned in their petition; and to take three days to deliberate what would be the proper answer to a petition of such importance, was prudent in the King. Three days accordingly were spent in that deliberation.

Though it appears that Rehoboam had dismissed his father's privy council, he had, however, brought them along with him to Shechem. And he thought proper first to ask their opinion and advice; old age claims respect, and grey hairs challenge reverence. 'King Rehoboam consulted with the old men that stood before Solomon, his father, while he yet lived, and said, What do ye advise that I may answer this people*.' Here is a mind candid to all appearance, and open to receive good advice. 'And they (the old men) spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a

* Chap. xii. 6.

‘servant to the people this day, and wilt serve
 ‘them, and answer them, and speak good words
 ‘to them, then they will be thy servants for ever †.
 ‘If thou wilt;’ this, I think, implies, that the
 old counsellors knew, or feared, that the King’s
 answer was formed already, by his having listened
 in private to those young men who were grown
 up with him. It may, however, seem, that when
 they said ‘this day,’ they advised the King to
 make large promises, and to give fair words on
 that critical day; and that, if he once got the
 people to submit to his rule, should they after-
 ward prove refractory, he might treat them as
 rebels, and compel them, by force, to be his ser-
 vants for ever. I cannot think this to be the
 meaning; the meaning certainly is, if thou wilt
 this day gratify the people; if thou wilt use le-
 nient expressions; if thou wilt act agreeably to
 all that is equitable and right in their petition;
 and if thou wilt continue to do so, then they will
 be thy subjects for ever. A prudent advice, in such
 circumstances, if ever there was one: and in this
 advice the old privy counsellors seem to have
 been unanimous; and had the new ministry gi-
 ven the like advice, the ten provinces, in all hu-
 man probability, would have continued in sub-
 jection to the house of David; the united king-
 dom would have been better able to withstand
 the attacks of foreign powers; and all the bloody
 wars which were afterwards carried on between
 the two kingdoms would have been prevented.
 But, alas! ‘Rehoboam forsook the counsel of

‘the old men.’ This is the first appearance of any thing blameable in Rehoboam; he forsook the counsel; he was not satisfied with it; he did not acquiesce in it; he departed from it, and rejected it, because it did not gratify his love of domination. And having got a new privy council, it was but decent that he should consult with them: ‘He consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him *.’ It commonly happens, that when a new King succeeds to a throne, there is, as it were, an universal agreement to flatter and to magnify him: his knowledge, his wisdom, his eloquence, his virtue, are extolled above all measure: every one about court strives to exceed another in this species of adulation; and every one expects, for his pains, a place or a pension under the new government. These flatterers are the most dangerous enemies of Princes. Thus James I. was, on his accession to the throne of England, so extravagantly flattered, that, though, at first, he perceived his danger from the sweetness of a potion so copiously administered to him, and had the sense to declare, “that these flatterers would spoil even a good King;” yet his sense was more and more damaged by constantly receiving and swallowing a draught so delightful and so stupifying; so that he wondered at his own ability, or King-craft as he called it, and vainly boasted that he had managed the affairs of England in the last years of Queen Elizabeth; though it is well known, that, for many years,

* Chap. xii. 8.

he and his ministers in Scotland were, like children in leading-strings, guided in every material step by that immortal Princess. Thus, when James II. came to the throne, his dignity and high spirit were loudly praised. The flattering courtiers boasted, that he would not, like Charles, debase himself to be a pensioner of France, tho' the French King, they say, declared that James was as willing to receive his money as his brother Charles had been. And thus also, when Anne succeeded the illustrious William III. she was flattered by a parliamentary address, that, by her capacity, she would retrieve the honour of the nation. And I make no doubt, but the Jewish counsellors talked in the same style with respect to Rehoboam: they flattered him, and taught him to think himself, in every respect, far superior to Solomon, his father. They are called young men; Rehoboam himself was not young; 'he was 'forty and one years old when he began to reign.' The counsellors who had been at school with him were not very young in point of age; but they were raw, unskilful, unpractised in state-affairs; and, as it would seem, they were like many others, abundantly young in point of political knowledge. It is remarkable, that the King speaks to those young counsellors in a style very different from that in which he spoke to the old: to the old counsellors, who had stood before his father, he said, 'How do ye advise that I may answer this 'people;' but, unto the young ones, who stood before himself, he said, 'What counsel give ye, that 'we may answer this people, who have spoken

‘ to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father
 ‘ did put upon us lighter *.’ I confess, I am more
 and more tempted to suspect, that the King con-
 sulted the old privy counsellors only to save ap-
 pearances. He was determined, it would seem,
 to give just such an answer as those who stood be-
 fore him should advise; and it is very probable,
 he knew, before-hand, what that advice was to
 be: ‘ WHAT WE may answer this people;’ a
 compliment from the King to these raw states-
 men; or, it means, that the answer to be given
 was to be a deed of the privy council, which, in ar-
 bitrary kingdoms, is, you know, of equal authority
 with an act of parliament in limited governments;
 and in these last it hath sometimes been so also.—
 To a Prince fond of despotic power, and elated
 with the belief that he was an incomparably
 greater personage than his predecessor, nothing
 could be more flattering than the advice which
 these young counsellors gave Rehoboam †. ‘ And
 ‘ the young men that were grown up with him,
 ‘ spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak
 ‘ unto this people that spake unto thee, saying,
 ‘ Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make
 ‘ thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say
 ‘ unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than
 ‘ my father’s loyns. And now, whereas my fa-
 ‘ ther did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add
 ‘ to your yoke. My father hath chastised you
 ‘ with whips, but I will chastise you with scor-
 ‘ pions.’ Nothing could be more foolish, more
 tyrannical, more exasperating, than the an-

* Verse 9. † Verse 10, 11.

swer which these young counsellors advised to be given to the petition of the delegates. Let me make a few remarks upon it. And, 1st, there is no apology made for the heavy yoke which Solomon had laid upon the people: something might have been said about his expensive buildings: to build the temple was his duty; God had appointed him to build it; he had got a solemn charge from his dying father to ornament that house with wonderful decorations; 'for the palace was not for man, but for the Lord God.' And he ought not to be blamed for building a palace to himself: but, it must be confessed, that, to waste much time, and labour, and money, upon grand and unnecessary buildings, can afford a Prince but a flimsy excuse for oppressing his subjects. The walls of Babylon, the hanging gardens there, the temple of Belus, the pyramids of Egypt, are looked upon as striking monuments of the grandeur of ancient times; but they are the monuments of a vain and useless grandeur. And in whatever country such works were erected, it is a sufficient proof that the common people there were held in a pitiable and abject bondage; dragged from their families, and from rural, innocent, useful occupations, and forced to drudge and sweat at ostentatious buildings, to gratify the pride and caprice of a despotic master.

2dly, The answer was foolish and unreasonable, because, instead of advising the King to make the yoke lighter, they advised him to make it heavier. There was certainly no need of adding to the yoke, or even of continuing the high

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taxes levied by Solomon. The buildings were finished, and the kingdom had peace. 'I will add 'to your yoke:' He was not even to tell them how much he was to add. Had there been a line drawn beyond which he was not to pass, a limited proportion of their services and effects, which, if performed and paid, he was not to exact more; the answer would have been more discreet, and the condition of the people somewhat more tolerable; but there was no such limitation: so that the poor Israelites had reason to dread, that all that they had was to be violently torn from them, to satisfy the rapaciousness of those young counsellors who unhappily had got Rehoboam under their guidance. In fact, they were to have nothing left which they could call their own. And, as appears from the next expression,

3dly, More was to be exacted from them than ever they could expect to have. 'My father made 'your yoke heavy; but my little finger shall be 'thicker than my father's loyns.' The services exacted, the taxes levied by my father, were, you say, a grievous burden; but the services and taxes which I am to exact, will be as much greater than those exacted by my father, as a man's body is thicker than his little finger; a proverbial expression, perhaps; but no words could more clearly discover the cruel and arbitrary temper of the counsellors who stood before this ill-advised King.

And I remark, 4thly, That they advise the King to tell the delegates, without disguise, how the services, and the payment of the taxes, were to be enforced, namely, by corporal pu-

nishment: 'My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions:' According to the savage practice in despotic kingdoms, Solomon, used, it seems, to enforce obedience to his arbitrary will, by chastising his subjects with whips or scourges; but Rehoboam was advised to do this with ten times more severity; he was to chastise them with scorpions, that is, with whips or scourges that had iron rowels affixed to them, which would tear the flesh from the very bone. This is the answer which Rehoboam's privy council advised him to make; the answer which, excepting one article, he actually made to the heads of the ten tribes; for 'Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the King had appointed, saying, Come to me on the third day. And the King answered the people roughly, and forsook the old mens counsel that they gave him, and spoke to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions*.' The edict itself was rigid and tyrannical; and it was announced to the people with roughness, with a stern and haughty countenance and evident marks that the King held them in contempt. You are to observe, that there is one article of the advice given which was not delivered by the King to the delegates; 'My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loyns.' Did this proceed from the King's lenity? I wish I could

* Verse 12, 13, 14.

think so; 'but the King spake roughly.' Perhaps the King had forgotten a few of the words which his counsellors had dictated to him; for, I believe, it was not yet the custom for Ministers to write the speech which the King was to deliver; the King was left to recollect the several words of their advice as his memory should serve him.

The effect this tyrannical declaration produced, was the same that every such declaration ought to produce, and will produce, on free minds. Such an undisguised determination to exercise unlimited and despotic power would inspire even cowards with manhood and resolution: for, will free men tamely submit to be slaves, and, if possible, worse than slaves, whilst they have it in their power to preserve their liberty, and to do themselves justice? The new counsellors might flatter Rehoboam, that there were awful rays of glory darting from his august countenance; that the people would be intimidated at his presence; that they would receive his royal orders with a humble submission, and yield obedience in the best manner they could; but both they and the King were altogether disappointed: though their remonstrance was received and heard; yet, after so determined and so rough an answer, they have not patience to remonstrate again. Nothing is so contemptible as threats, even by a Prince, when it is well known that such threats cannot be put in execution. Without being abashed, they, in the King's very face, avow and announce their revolt. And I cannot help think-

ing, that in the King's presence they express their indignation with some degree of insolence: for 'when all Israel saw that the King 'hearkened not unto them, the people answered 'the King, saying, What portion have we in 'David? neither have we inheritance in the son 'of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel! now see to 'thine house, David. So Israel departed to their 'tents*.' What portion have we in David? we are not of that tribe: What inheritance have we in the son of Jesse? it is none of our concern to become slaves, to support the haughty pride of a King sprung from so poor a family as that of Jesse; for they spake so by way of contempt. There is even a sort of challenge given, a defiance of Rehoboam; see to thine house, David; we are able to defend ourselves; we defy thy power. To your tents, O Israel: so Israel departed to their tents.

Rehoboam was the third King of that race. The original family of Jewish Kings was that of Saul, after whose death his son, Ishbosheth, as I have said, reigned seven years: it is however remarkable, that the Israelites seek not for a King in that family. Perhaps there was none of the family alive who was fit to be made King: David had delivered seven brave men, sons of Saul, to the Gibeonites, to be hanged at Gibeah of Saul, to turn away the anger of the Lord in a time of famine†. And Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, if alive, was lame. But in those days, it was not a regard to family, but esteem of military accom-

* Verse 16. † 2 Sam. xxi. 1, — 10.

plishments, which made people chuse one to be their King. Thus the Israelites said to David at Hebron, 'In time past, even when Saul was King, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the Lord thy God said unto thee, thou shalt feed my people, thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel*.' And the same Israelites had it in view to make Jeroboam their King, because he was a *mighty man of valour*.

The young men grown up with Rehoboam, having got him under their direction, pushed him on to another very rash and fatal step. 'Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute, and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died; therefore King Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem†.' This Adoram had been over the levy in Solomon's time: he was kept in place, though the old counsellors had been dismissed. In his office, though he had pleased the King, he had, it seems, rendered himself obnoxious to the people. He was sent to levy the tribute as usual; whether the heavy yoke only that was paid to Solomon, or with additions, as the King had said, doth not appear. But, at sight of him, all Israel are inflamed against him. The heads of the tribes, who had been exasperated by the King's answer, probably conducted the licentious spirit: the people, all in a ferment, rise with an unbridled fury: with a savage and unrelenting rage, the incensed mob, disgusted at Adoram before, and incensed by hearing of the answer

* 1 Chron. xi. 2.

† 1 Kings xii. 18.

which the King had just given to the remonstrance, they stoned Adoram with stones, that he died. A mob is altogether unjustifiable; but rulers ought to avoid such unjustifiable steps as are provoking and violent, and may drive the exasperated people to extremities.

What must these young counsellors have now thought of their desperate counsels, by which the King was disgraced and terrified, and seemed to be in danger of his life: nor was his fear without ground; for, when a mob is once a-foot, what or who is it that can put a stop to its fury? even Majesty itself, if in the way, may fall a victim to its senseless rage. Must not the King himself have been somewhat sorry that he forsook the prudent counsel of the old men, when he sees himself forced to flee in terror from those, who, if he had spoken and acted with propriety, would have trembled before him, and yielded a ready obedience to his just commands? He made speed to get him up to his chariot, and drove as quickly as he could to Jerusalem.

When Rehoboam had, by flight, escaped to the capital; after his authority had been controuled, his will resisted, and the collector of his taxes massacred by a mob; he, without repealing the obnoxious edict, or taking time to think of some lenient steps, being yet directed by his young counsellors, had immediate recourse to coercive measures; he immediately levied a powerful army to force the revolted provinces to submit again to his grievous yoke, and to pay the heavy taxes imposed upon them. ‘And when

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' Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assem-
 ' bled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of
 ' Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand
 ' chosen men, which were warriors, to fight a-
 ' gainst the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom
 ' again to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon *.' Had
 he first have made their burden lighter, and re-
 pealed the edict for an unlimited tribute, which
 he had so recently enacted, I do not know but
 the rage of the people would have soon subsided,
 and, from their liking to David's family, they
 might have returned again, and submitted to
 Rehoboam: but there was no such repeal, no re-
 laxation; he assembled a hundred and fourscore
 thousand. I suspect, that the men of Judah and
 Benjamin had no great mind to this war against
 their brethren: for, a few years after this period,
 Abijam levied and led on to battle no fewer than
 four hundred thousand. Be this as it may, Re-
 hoboam thought this a sufficient army; for he
 did not, as was often the custom, hire the Syri-
 ans, or other foreign troops, to crush the spirits
 of the revolted provinces: but when this army
 of a hundred and eighty thousand are mustered,
 and upon their march; their march is counter-
 manded by an authority infinitely superior to that
 of Rehoboam: for ' the word of God came unto
 ' Shemaiah, the man of God, saying, Speak unto
 ' Rehoboam the son of Solomon, King of Judah,
 ' and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin,
 ' and to the remnant of the people, Thus saith
 ' the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against

* Verse 21.

‘ your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house*.’ It is said in scripture, that sometimes God makes the judges or leaders of a nation fools; but when the leaders of a nation have gone into foolish or ruinous measures, it seldom happens that the infatuation is universal: there may be still a few uncorrupted persons who have love to their country, to its laws, its liberty, and its peace; who have sense to see the unrighteous and destructive schemes that are going to be pursued, and who have also spirit and resolution to cry out against them; though, alas! when folly, corruption, and venality, have become general, these friends of wisdom, and justice, and peace, often times cry in vain: but when a Shemaiah, the man of God, known to be a prophet, when he raises his voice, when he speaks in the name of God, it is certainly becoming that an immediate stop be put to unjust and pernicious measures, however keenly these were pursued before. It appears, however, that it was not Rehoboam, and still less can we imagine that it was the young men grown up with him, who listened to Shemaiah, saying, ‘ Thus saith the Lord, thou shalt not go up to fight against thy brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house.’ It was the house of Judah and Benjamin, and the remnant of the people, that is, some few of the ten tribes who had not joined in the revolt; these were they who listened to the man of God. *They*, it is expressly said, not *HE*, but *they*, hearkened to the word of the Lord, and ‘ returned to depart

* Verse 22, 23, 24.

‘ according to the word of the Lord.’ Indeed, it is not likely, that Rehoboam, ‘ who did evil, and ‘ forsook the law of the Lord,’ would be much influenced by the authority of a prophet. When Micajah modestly, but in a picturesque and affecting manner, dissuaded Ahab from going to fight against the Syrians at Ramoth-Gilead; Ahab, however, proceeded; and, which is more, even the good Jehoshaphat, notwithstanding all that Micajah had said, went to fight along with that idolatrous King; but the people, Judah and Benjamin, hearkend. It is not said that Rehoboam gave them leave to disband: they had, as I observed before, no great heart to the war; so they returned every man to his house. It is very possible they thought that if they should, by force, enslave the ten tribes; the ten tribes, in return, might soon be made the willing instruments to enslave them. One thing which must have had great weight with the army, was the word of the prophet speaking to them in the name of God: ‘ Return, ‘ for this thing is from me.’ We are told above, that ‘ the King hearkened not to the people,’ (that is, to the petition of the delegates at Shechem;) ‘ for the cause was from the Lord, that he might ‘ perform his saying which the Lord spake by A- ‘ hijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Ne- ‘ bat*.’ Here we are swallowed up and lost in wonder: we are led to think of these secret things which belong to the Lord; we are led up to the original cause of every revolution in states and kingdoms. ‘ O the depth of the riches both of

* Verse 15.

' the wisdom and knowledge of God! how un-
 ' searchable are his judgments, and his ways past
 ' finding out! for who hath known the mind of
 ' the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor*?'
 Rehoboam's foolish answer was the occasion or
 immediate cause, but it was only the second cause,
 of the revolt. The operation of all causes is guid-
 ed and directed by the incomprehensible wisdom
 of the ' Governor of the nations, who ruleth in
 ' the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomso-
 ' ever he will. The Most High divideth to the
 ' nations their inheritance. God changeth the
 ' times and the seasons. He removeth Kings,
 ' and setteth up Kings. He leadeth counsellors;
 ' he leadeth princes away spoiled; overthroweth the
 ' mighty, and makes the judges of the earth as
 ' vanity. Promotion cometh not from the east,
 ' nor from the west, nor from the south, but
 ' God is judge; he putteth down one, and set-
 ' teth up another. Wisdom and might are his;
 ' he turneth wise men backward, and makes their
 ' knowledge foolish: but his counsel shall stand;
 ' he will do all his pleasure.' God often makes
 use of the folly and wickedness of men to bring-
 about the ends of his adorable providence. Nay,
 the attempts of men to defeat or retard the ap-
 pointments of divine providence, tend often to
 the more speedy execution of them. Rehoboam
 knew that formerly the ten tribes were an inde-
 pendent kingdom; he knew that Sheba had en-
 deavoured that they should revolt from David;
 and, having heard of the prophecy of Ahijah, he

* Rqm. xi. 33, 34.

expected, it is probable, that, by loading these ten tribes with heavy taxes, he would depress their spirits, and retain them to be his subjects for ever; but this attempt of his was the cause or occasion of an immediate revolt. The means used to depress or impoverish a country or province, are oftentimes the means of its riches and aggrandisement.

Whilst the ten tribes thus revolted, Judah, in a large sense, that is, Judah and Benjamin, continued in their allegiance. Probably these two tribes were treated with some indulgence. Rehoboam was of the tribe of Judah; and Jerusalem, where the King's palace was, stood within the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. The King, it is likely, intended to exercise his rigour chiefly against the ten tribes for the reason I have just hinted at.

In the mean time Jeroboam was crowned. 'And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him into the congregation, and made him King over all Israel*.' All the heads of the tribes *knew* he was come again; for he had been with them at Shechem, and he was no doubt glad that the King gave so foolish an answer. And when all the people also knew that he was come again, they sent for him, and called him, and elected him to be their King in a full congregation.

But it soon appeared how ill Jeroboam deserved that elevation to which God in his providence

* Verse 20.

had raised him. Entirely swayed by worldly motives, he disregarded the exhortations and the promise of God which Ahijah had delivered to him. He made religion give way to reasons of state. He said in his heart, 'Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David; if the people shall go up to do sacrifice in the house of God at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their Lord, even unto Rehoboam, King of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam, King of Judah *'. To hinder the people from going three times a-year to worship in the temple of Jerusalem, as they were strictly commanded by the law of God, he established idolatry in Israel; like Rehoboam, he got counsellors who advised him to this impious step. He took counsel, and set up two calves of gold, one in Dan, and one in Bethel; and, pretending all this was for the ease of the people, he said, 'It is too much to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt; and this thing became a sin †.'—It was thus that Jeroboam made Israel to sin; and it is thus, that, for causes political, selfish, sometimes cruel, rulers sacrifice *the pure* worship of God, and establish idolatry and image-worship in its place; not that every change in a state is hurtful to religion, or to civil liberty. The reformation in Germany was favourable to both; so was the reformation in England and in Scotland; and so also, in the days of our fore-fathers, was the Revolution.

* Verse 26. † 28, 29, 30.

But it was a bold step that was taken by Jeroboam; and, if a great part of the Israelites had not already embraced idolatry, it might have cost him dear; it might have cost him his crown; as a like daring step did to an ill-advised and unfortunate sovereign of Great Britain: for the step Jeroboam ventured to take was at once to alter or corrupt the established religion in opposition to the written word of God, which could not be mis-interpreted. It was just as if a prince should introduce and establish the Roman Catholic religion into a Protestant kingdom, in opposition to the clear and standing law of the land. And in so important a step Jeroboam judged it expedient to take counsel, which would, at least, render the counsellors, who agreed with him, as blameable as he was himself; and you know that those who are near a throne do, too commonly, fall in with the measures, however illegal or pernicious, which they know are agreeable to the prince.

Having, from sacred history, offered to your view some things which may seem to impeach the understanding, and leave some stain upon the character of Rehoboam, I joyfully take notice of one thing which is surely to his honour: He repented; threatenings from God had their due effect upon him; his heart underwent a salutary change; he changed his measures, and I think it probable that he changed his men also. When Shishak had invaded Judea, ‘Then came She-
‘maiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the
‘princes of Judah, that were gathered together
‘to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto

‘ them, Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken
 ‘ me, and therefore have I also left you in the
 ‘ hand of Shishak. Whereupon the princes of
 ‘ Israel, and the king humbled themselves, and
 ‘ they said, the Lord is righteous*.’ Former-
 ly the king was high minded, and spake rough-
 ly; he is now serious, humble, and devout.
 He had, it seems, by this time dismissed the
 young counsellors, being convinced that they
 had dreadfully misled him, embroiled his affairs,
 lost him ten provinces of his father’s kingdom,
 and put him in danger of losing the whole. We
 no longer hear of the young men grown up with
 him; the king is now attended by the princes of
 Judah, of Israel; these princes, who, five years
 before, ‘ hearkened to the word of the Lord,’
 and declined to ‘ go up and fight against their
 ‘ brethren.’ The kingdom was to be sorely chas-
 tised, “ that they might know the difference be-
 tween God’s service and the service of a foreign
 king:” but the king and the princes had repen-
 ted, and it was not to be destroyed; for, ‘ when
 ‘ the Lord saw that they humbled themselves,
 ‘ the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, say-
 ‘ ing, They have humbled themselves, therefore
 ‘ I will not destroy them, but I will grant them
 ‘ some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be
 ‘ poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shi-
 ‘ shak. And when he humbled himself, the
 ‘ wrath of the Lord turned from him, that he
 ‘ would not destroy him altogether: and also in
 ‘ Judah things went well†.’

* 2 Chron. xii. 5, 6.

† 2 Chron. xii. 7, 8.

I have explained this historical passage of scripture in the best way I could. I conclude the discourse with a few more remarks.

1st. The first remark I make, is, that it is an easy thing to govern mankind. The bulk of men are, as I may say, haltered; they are born to serve; they are willing, ever desirous to be led; they submit and live in quietness under any government that is but half tolerable. If there be insurrections or revolts in any state or empire, princes, or their ministers, have commonly themselves to blame. If princes will pay a becoming regard to the established religion,—if they will govern by the known and equitable laws of the land,—if they will execute justice impartially,—if they will abstain from atrocious and bloody acts of oppression,—if they will preserve inviolated the rights, the privileges, and ancient characters granted to the people; in all ordinary cases, there will be no insurrection, no revolt at all: even though rights be encroached upon, or taxes augmented, if it is slowly and gradually done, the people will still be quiet. Indeed, when, like the Israelites, a people have been long overburdened with a grievous yoke, and see coming upon them, all at once, an additional burden, which would crush them to the ground, and render life itself insupportable, they may sometimes be exasperated and provoked to act as that people did: and if there be unanimity among many tribes or provinces, who have separate interests, and were many of them, formerly, jealous of one another, this seems to be a decisive proof that

the provocation given them hath been extremely great. But how quiet and peaceable subjects are, even under despotic rule, we may be fully satisfied by surveying the state of the known world as it is at present: consider how wretched men are in eastern kingdoms and empires: consider the deplorable slavery of the subjects in Turkey, in Russia, and in some other kingdoms and states in Europe, where the common people are, they say, driven to market and sold along with the land on which they pine away their lives in misery. Yet, in all these states, the people live quietly, and seldom make any insurrection; 'they couch down' under the mighty burden; they 'bow the shoulder, and become servants unto tribute.' Well would it become any successor to a throne, where the subjects are so wretched, to pity their lamentable condition, and, of his own accord, to grant them what the ten tribes so earnestly sought from Rehoboam; 'thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father and his heavy yoke, which he put upon us, lighter.' Such a prince would feel a generous pleasure; for he would hear a relieved and grateful people say, with tears of joy, Thou hast made our burden lighter, WE WILL SERVE THEE!

2d. I remark, That though subjects may judge they are aggrieved by some particular laws, and feel themselves over-burdened by a heavy yoke; yet, in all ordinary cases, it is their duty to yield obedience to the lawful magistrate. I dare not say, that resistance is, in all possible

cases, criminal. This doctrine, absurd and slavish as it is, hath sometimes been fashionable in this country: it is not yet a hundred years since passive-obedience and non-resistance was, from many pulpits in Britain, weekly, obtruded upon the easy credulity of an injured and abused people; and, amidst the wonderful changes that happen daily, it may soon usurp the pulpit again, and become as fashionable as ever.—But I think of the glorious Revolution, and cannot but approve of the noble stand that was then made against popery and arbitrary power: a stand, by which the British constitution was improved and settled; and a foundation was laid for that great, that national happiness, which hath been enjoyed under the illustrious and amiable princes of the Hanoverian line.—However, government is the ordinance of God; and anarchy, rebellion, or civil war in a country, are, any of them, so dreadful, that subjects ought to suffer much before they begin to think of resisting established authority: they ought, dutifully, and earnestly, and repeatedly, to petition the throne for redress: they ought to wait long and patiently for that relief which they wish for. And unless their yoke, like that of the Israelites, be altogether intolerable, and unless they be almost sure of bettering their condition by resistance, they ought not to resist at all: they ought both from a sense of duty, and from a regard to self-preservation, to obey; and if they disobey, they ought to submit with patience to the

sufferings which may be lawfully inflicted upon them.

3d. I remark, that, when a free people are bereaved of their liberty, the prince is commonly much less blameable than his ministers and counsellors. I do not think that Rehoboam was OBSTINATELY bent to rule arbitrarily. If, as I have so often said, the counsel of those grown up with him, had been the same with that of the old men, who had stood before his father, his answer to the tribes would have been very different from what it was. And, in governments where the legislature consists of several branches, it is natural to expect that the prince will strive to rule without constraint, according to his own judgment and sense of things; for the love of power is natural to every man: and if senators, and those assembled to take care of the rights and liberty of the common people, are altogether passive; if they act as if they had no sense, no opinion, no judgment of their own; if they tamely agree to every requisition that is made by the prince or his minister; and if, in consequence of this tame, this sequacious behaviour, the liberty of a nation is lost, it is not the prince who is to be blamed; he hath acted naturally in his station; it is the senators and others who have done wrong; they have betrayed their country; the blame lyes at their door: and one cannot help regretting, that almost every minister of state strives, with all his might, to increase the prerogative of the crown, and to abridge the privileges of the subject. This is the more to be wondered at, as the continuance

of a minister in place depends upon the mere will of the sovereign: the minister may next day be turned down to mix with the people whose rights he hath shamefully incroached upon. The conduct I speak of, can, I think, proceed from nothing but vile adulation, or as vile a desire to accumulate a ministerial estate.

4th. From the temper of Rehoboam toward the Israelites, every master or superior should learn not to be harsh toward his dependents. The poorest dependents may have it in their power to retaliate, and may be exasperated to retaliate in a very dreadful manner. But severity toward inferiors is surely unmanly, and unbecoming. The labouring part of mankind, especially those who till the ground, should be treated with lenity, and allowed to live some way comfortably upon the fruit of their labour: and yet very often this is not the case. The new master says, in effect, to those poor laborious, and useful people, as Rehoboam said to the ten tribes, 'My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke.' It ought not to be so; nor should masters of any kind treat their servants with rigour. If providence hath placed them in that humble station, they are, however, partakers of the same nature with their masters, and have the same exalted hopes of glory. Every thing reasonable should be done by the masters to render their condition as agreeable as possible. 'Masters,' says the great apostle, 'give unto your servants that which is just and equal, forbearing threatening, knowing that ye also have a

‘master in heaven, neither is there any respect of
 ‘persons with him.’ My next remark is,
 5th. That in this history we have a striking
 instance of the uncertainty and short duration of
 worldly greatness, of opulence, and of liberty it-
 self. The kingdom of Judah, united to that of
 Israel, had been awful and respectable in the
 time of David and Solomon; but, weakened by
 the revolt of the ten tribes, Rehoboam was not
 able to protect the small remaining kingdom of
 Judah. Solomon had made silver and gold at
 Jerusalem as plenteous as stones; and in particu-
 lar the richness of the temple was immense. But
 ‘the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the
 ‘treasures of the king’s house, were all taken
 ‘and carried away’ in the reign of Rehoboam:
 It was but five years after Solomon’s death that
 Shishak, king of Egypt, came and carried away
 with him the gold vessels of the temple; and,
 by forcing Rehoboam to pay him tribute, made
 the kingdom of Judah a province of Egypt: The
 gold laid up by David, the gold which Solomon
 acquired by commerce, and the gold which he
 levied from his subjects, by the heavy yoke he
 laid on them; all, even all of it, soon became
 the prey of a rapacious spoiler. How transi-
 ent is wealth and human glory. How quickly
 may a nation lose its liberty, and become tribu-
 tary to some powerful neighbour. A nation may
 now be free, and may soon be in bondage. A peo-
 ple may be rich, and may soon be impoverished.
 So also may any individual; ‘Why then set
 ‘ye your heart on that which is not? for riches

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‘ make themselves wings, and flee away as an eagle towards heaven. Why then make the gold your hope? or the fine gold your confidence?’ Why lay a grievous yoke on the poor, that so you may lay up treasures on earth? ‘ Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven,’ where no spoiler can come, where no thief can break through and steal. Assert yourselves into that liberty of which all the powers of earth and hell cannot bereave you; freedom of soul, liberty from the bondage of corruption, ‘ the glorious liberty of the sons of God.’ By self-government, and by faith in Christ, you will obtain this liberty; and if ‘ the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed.’ Some of you may be servants, may be in straits, in worldly trouble; yield yourselves voluntarily to be conducted by the word and the Spirit of Jesus; there is nothing grievous in his yoke; no slavery, but the most perfect freedom under his government. He calls upon you; ‘ Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’

6. I remark further, that the quiet, the strength, and even the independence of a kingdom, is endangered, when any of its Grandees, or men of rank and talents, are provoked at home, and forced to seek protection in some neighbouring inimical kingdom: it is not to be expected, but that a man of talents, who hath been harshly used in

his own country, will exert himself to irritate and assist those who protect him against those who have injured him. David, indeed, when he was on his march to fight against Saul, was restrained from shedding the blood of his countrymen; for the Philistines ordered him to depart to his home. And Themistocles, when the critical period came, chused rather to die a voluntary death, than to help his royal benefactor to conquer Greece. But Jeroboam, more corrupted than that brave Athenian; Jeroboam, stimulated by revenge, fired by ambition, and encouraged by that esteem which he knew the ten tribes had of his political and military talents, and perhaps trusting also, that Ahijah's prophecy would certainly be fulfilled, did all he could to split the united kingdom of Judah, which would render it less formidable to its neighbours than it had been under David and Solomon; for, as David had been a great warrior, had conquered Edom, and even Eloth and Ezion-geber, ports upon the Red Sea, in the neighbourhood of Egypt; it can hardly be doubted that Egypt dreaded the military spirit of the Israelitish nation, and even its commercial spirit, by which it had grown so rich and powerful in the reign of Solomon. Hence it was, that Jeroboam met with a kind reception in the court of Shishak; he aimed and expected to be King of the ten tribes: and, it is highly probable, that, as soon as he reached Egypt, he entered on the properest means to execute his plan,—in which he was assisted by Shishak,—who encouraged the factious spirit,—and

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pushed on the revolt of the ten tribes. Nay, I must presume, that a league between Shishak and Jeroboam was early entered into, and subsisted long; and that it was because Rehoboam was pressed and over-awed by the armies of Egypt, on the one hand, and by those of the ten tribes on the other, that, without striking a single stroke*, he delivered his capital to be plundered by Shishak, and his kingdom to be tributary to Egypt. Jeroboam co-operated with Shishak, and Shishak received the spoil. Thus it is, that a designing Prince, by an unexpensive kindness to a Fugitive of rank and ability, is enabled to embroil the affairs of a rival kingdom; and thus a powerful kingdom doth, commonly, like the lion in the fable, seize, by force, on all the conquests that have been made by itself, and its less powerful allies.

I remark, in the last place, that even in Ahijah's prediction, that ten tribes were to be given to Jeroboam, the splitting of the kingdom is accounted a judgment of God, a severe punishment of irreligion and idolatry. Indeed, Ahijah's prophecy is not a bare prediction; it is a declaration of cause and effect, the stated order of God's providence: the people had gone into idolatry, and they are delivered over to be led into a system of idolatry, by the worldly wisdom of Jeroboam: 'For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee—because that they have forsaken me, and worship-

* See Josephus.

‘ped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, ‘Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and Milcom, the god of the children of Ammon, and ‘have not walked in my ways, to do that which ‘is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes ‘and my judgments*.’ And is there not cause to look on this war, which is already kindled; and which threatens a division of the British empire, as a judgment of heaven, for our impiety and wickedness? Most certainly we deserve a stroke; for we have been forgetful of God.—At the Revolution, our civil liberty was secured, and the pure religion was established; the two British kingdoms were (the happy reverse of what was done by Jeroboam) cemented into one by the incorporating Union; and to us a wide avenue was laid open to opulence. What have we done in return for all this bounty of providence? Why, religion hath been impudently despised; the divinity of the gospel hath been questioned and opposed; the sense of right and wrong hath been denied; daring attempts have been made to destroy the very foundations of religion and morality; impious and worthless persons have crept into offices of trust; and ‘the wicked walk on ‘every side, when the vilest men are exalted;’ men who are profane, debauched, unjust, fraudulent, cruel, have been countenanced and encouraged in their impiety and wickedness. In our land, such impiety and wickedness have been practised, as have, in all ages, been the fore-runners of God’s judgments upon sinful nations:

* 1 Kings xi. 31, 33.

many have thrown aside the very appearance of religion.—What judgments God hath denounced and executed against the Jews, most of you have heard or read;—what God will do, or how he will deal with you, I have no authority to say;—what he may do, you all know;—what you deserve, every person ought seriously to consider. Of all this it is my duty to put you in mind, and to call upon you to amend your ways and your doings, if you wish to escape the judgments wherewithal you are threatened. Trust not to appearances; that opulence, that elevation to which some of you have reached, by your industry under the best constitution of government, may soon be blasted, and the very constitution itself undergo the fate of other countries where civil liberty was once enjoyed.—And I have authority to tell you, that if you repent, and live by faith, all will be well with you, probably in time, and most certainly through eternity. When Rehoboam and the Princes of Judah humbled themselves, and no doubt the people humbled themselves also, the wrath of the Lord was turned away, and they heard the voice of God saying, ‘They have humbled themselves, therefore I will not destroy them.’ In one word, my brethren, keep in mind the fluctuating and uncertain state of all human affairs; turn your attention, and bend your course, toward that city which hath foundations, and that kingdom which cannot be moved. May God bless, &c.

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